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# A Confidential Talk

WITH THE

# Boys of America.

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BY

JOHN M. DICK,

EVANGELIST.

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Springfield
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DEDICATED
TO THE BOYS' DEPARTMENTS
OF THE
YOUNG MEN'S CHRISTIAN ASSOCIATION.

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My Dear Boy Friend:

You will doubtless wonder why one whom you have never seen addresses you as friend. Let me say before speaking to you on what I consider to be one of the most important subjects of a boy's life, that I want you to think of me as your friend, even though you have never seen nor heard of me. You are a boy over ten (10) years of age, and as such I want you to listen to me for a little time while I tell you some things that you ought to know about yourself.

You perhaps do know at least the impure side of the subject of my talk, but I want

that you should know the pure side, and to-day I am to tell you about

SELF-ABUSE.

1. Its results—(*a*) On the body; (*b*) on the mind; (*c*) on the soul.

2. Things you ought *not* to do in order *not* to be tempted.

3. Things you can do in order to gain strength with which to successfully fight this sin.

4. The *best* and *surest* help a boy can have in order that he may conquer this habit.

5. Every boy's duty in regard to self-abuse.

First—I will describe what self-abuse is. Perhaps you have never heard this term before, but I am sure you have heard other terms which mean the same thing, and so to be sure that you understand just what I am talking about I will speak in boy language. Of course you know that when God formed your body, he formed each part, as the eye, the ear, the hand, etc., to perform a

certain work, and no one part was made impure, but every organ was made to be pure, and together all organs of a boy's body should form a perfect, pure, clean boy. You also know that if you should abuse your eyes your sight would become impaired or lost; or if you abuse your teeth they will decay; or if you abuse your ears you will lose your power of hearing, now just so true is it that if you abuse any other part of your body the work for which it was made cannot be done; and even more, the very fact of its work not being done will lead to the other parts not doing their work, for the body is just like a big machine—if any part is left out, the whole machine will refuse to work. You can, of course, see that this being true, it is of great importance that you do not abuse any part of your body. When I speak of self-abuse I mean what a boy means when he speaks of playing with himself, which is the playing with that organ which God has given every boy in order that the impurities

taken from the blood may be sent from the body in the shape of water, or what we call urine. Many boys, instead of keeping this organ for that purpose, are handling it with other purposes than that for which it was made, and if you have learned to do this I want to plead with you to *stop it at once*, and if you have not yet learned to do it I want *you to be on your guard and never yield to the temptation*. Other boys may try to get you to do it, and perhaps some impure man may tell you that there is no harm in it, but I tell you, *Beware of all such persons!* for I know of boys whose lives are well nigh ruined because of this dreadful habit, and many young men of my acquaintance who confess to have learned, when boys, to handle this organ, are to-day pale and sickly, with all true ambition gone.

I think I have made clear to you what self-abuse is. I want now to tell you what

ITS RESULTS

are upon the body, mind and soul.

1. The body is the home of the mind and soul, and God's book tells us that our bodies are the temples of the Holy Spirit, and so if we are to have our mind and soul well housed, and if we are to be good temples for God's spirit to dwell in, then we must keep our bodies pure. I have said that young men of my acquaintance who have been committing self-abuse are pale, weak and sickly. This is a result on the body. Physicians have told me that the reason so many boys' faces are pale and pimply, eyes sunken, teeth poor, appetite lost, and they listless and careless about their dress. is because they are committing self-abuse. I know of a young man who was a member of a Young Men's Christian Association with which I was connected, whose body was covered with sores, and for six months that young man was compelled to remain in a darkened room, one of the main causes being self-abuse. I might mention many cases of this kind, resulting from self-abuse, but it

is only necessary to say that the results of self-abuse on a boy's body are such as in time to utterly ruin it. *Do you want to have a strong, well-developed body? Then don't commit this sin.*

2. Its results upon a boy's mind are terrible. I was talking to a boy the other day, and he told me that he had been doing this thing for three years. I wish you could have seen him. He was silly and half-witted; none of the boys respected him, because he did not have the ordinary common sense of a boy of his age, and when I told him what the results of the habit were upon the mind, the tears came to his eyes and he promised to give up the habit that he might make a man of himself. How many young men and boys become insane as a result of this habit, it is hard to say, but physicians who have studied the matter tell me that many young men are sent to the insane asylum each year because of their minds giving way as a result of self-

abuse. Only a few weeks ago I had a physician talk to a boys' meeting on "Personal Purity," and he spoke very plainly about this terrible sin. After the meeting had closed one of the older boys went to him and asked him if he could meet him for a private talk, and at the private talk the boy told him that he had been committing self-abuse until even at night he could not stop the flow of *semen**—even though he did not handle his private parts—and he said that it

* The semen, spoken of above, is a fluid or liquid substance formed from the blood, and is passed out of the body through the penis. This does not generally pass off until a boy is fourteen or fifteen years of age, and then only as a boy abuses himself; but, as a result of self-abuse, this fluid will many times pass off when a boy is simply thinking of impure things, or perhaps dreaming about impure pictures or stories. Some boys think that to be able to throw off this semen makes men of them, but let me tell you that a boy who abuses himself *so that semen is sent from the body*, is but taking a short cut to the ruin of his whole being. *He is sending off his very life and vitality with it.* Remember, also, that if there is no flow of semen at first, that if you persist in committing this sin it will be but a short while before the flow will come and you will be *unable to stop it.* In after years, when you become a man, it will be natural for the semen to flow at certain times, *but not in early boyhood days.*

was impossible for him to study, so weak and exhausted was he after the night season. This is, of course, an extreme case, but it is just what may happen to *you* if *you* persist in committing this sin against your mind.

3. I now pass to its results upon the soul. While I was General Secretary of a Young Men's Christian Association, a boy—a member of the Boys' Department—came to me and said: "Mr. Dick, the boys want me to run for President, but I don't want to; I can't do it." He was a bright, intelligent Christian boy, and I rather thought that he was just the boy for President, so I told him that if the boys wanted him and if he had no good reason for not so doing, that I thought it was his duty to run. He told me that he had a good reason for refusing, and then with tears in his eyes he told me that he was addicted to self-abuse and that he could not give it up. I worked long with that boy, and tried in every way to help him, but he let that sin conquer him,

and his spiritual life left him. He lost all interest in the Boys' Department, and I doubt not but that to-day he is going toward Satan rather than toward God. I tell you, my dear boy, that you *cannot* love and serve Jesus Christ if you do not refuse to be impure. Then, again, the final home of the soul is to be heaven, and God's Word tells us that no self-abuser* can enter the kingdom of God. I am sure that you want to be a Christian boy, and that you want to enter heaven when you leave this sinful world. If so, I plead with you in the words of the great Apostle Paul, "Keep thyself pure."†

Now let me speak to you about a few things that boys do that lead them to self-abuse and let me warn you to avoid doing them. It will be hard work for you to avoid all of them, but it is a matter of life and death, and to-day I am pleading with you to choose life. As a boy you are familiar with the

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* I. Cor. vi: 9. † I. Tim. v: 22.

low joke and smutty story which are so often heard in a company of boys. Did you ever think how much easier it is to remember these impure jokes and stories than to remember your school lessons? Well, it is easier, and I tell you, my boy, it is not only easy to remember them, *but it is hard to forget them*, and every time *you* speak an impure word or hear an impure story *you* have taken one step towards self-abuse, and your fight against this habit is made so much the harder if you would win. John B. Gough, the great temperance lecturer, said that he would willingly let his right arm be cleft from his shoulder with an axe, if by so doing he could forget the impure stories of his boyhood days. I warn you, my boy, to beware of the impure joke and story. *Don't tell them. Don't listen to them.* Leave the man or boy or crowd where they are being told. Never laugh at them, should you be compelled to hear them, for it is dangerous.

Then, again, there is the temptation to

every boy to read impure papers and books. I call upon you as a boy who wants to be saved from this dreadful habit of self-abuse and its results to leave entirely alone all impure papers and books. You will see them, other boys will perhaps give them to you to read. Refuse them, for they are the devil's messengers of death to the boys who read them.

Again, I want to warn you against the impure pictures which, to the shame of our country, are almost forced into the eyes of our boys. Remember, my boy, that whatever is seen by the eye is flashed by the optic nerve to the brain and you cannot erase it. No, that impure picture which you looked upon is there, and when you would be pure that picture is tempting you to be impure. I have seen boys crowded together looking very intently at pictures, and found that they were pictures of half-dressed women. My boy, beware, for they are snares of Satan to lead the boys of America to the hell of a

lost body, mind and soul. When you see an impure picture in a window, on a bill-board, or anywhere else, turn from it, for it is dangerous.

There is one thing that I want you never under any consideration to do: that is, never to consult any quack doctor, nor indeed any physician who advertises to cure self-abuse, for I tell you they cannot do it, and even if they could many of them do not wish to—they are simply after your money. If you are in need of a physician's advice, consult your family physician or some upright Christian doctor. Many young men and boys have been ruined by what is termed quack doctors. *Never have anything to do with them.*

I wish that these few hints might stir you to always look upon the low joke and smutty story, the impure paper and book, and the impure picture as *red flags* warning you that danger is ahead if you do not turn from them. Let me give you a test to apply

to all of these things. It is this: Never say, read, or look upon anything that you would not be willing that your father should hear, read, or look upon with you, for remember that though you may do these things without your earthly father's knowledge, yet your Heavenly Father sees and knows all you say and do.

I must now pass to

A FEW SUGGESTIONS

as to *what a boy can do* that will prove a help to him to give up or to avoid this habit of self-abuse. They are things that every boy can do.

1. *Be clean.* It has been well said that "Cleanliness is second only to godliness," and I believe that if our boys were more careful about the cleanliness of the body there would be less temptation to be impure. I find that the boys who are always careful to keep their teeth clean, and hands and face always free from dirt, and body washed regularly, and clothes neat and clean, are

generally free from the habit of self-abuse. If you are committing self-abuse and want to break the habit, then I tell you, my boy, *keep all parts of your body clean.* This leads me to speak of a very important thing as a help to purity. It is Bathing. I do not mean the weekly bath which most boys take, which is generally soap and warm water, but I mean a cold water bath, either in tub, shower or sponge form. I do not think there is any remedy a boy can take that will help him so much to keep from abusing himself as a cold water bath taken each morning and evening. If you cannot have a tub to take it in, by all means use a sponge. Such a bath can be taken in a very few moments. Be sure to apply the cold water in the middle of the back from the neck down, and also on the private parts. It will help every boy not only to be pure but healthy also, and I am sure you want to be both.

2. Another help is in regard to your *Eating*. Stop eating fancy pastry, such as pies, etc., also avoid eating pickles and all seasonings, such as pepper, mustard and sauces, and eat plain, simple food, at least until you have conquered this habit. You should also drink little or no coffee and tea, but in its place drink cocoa and lots of milk. You may think these things have little to do with the matter, and are hard to give up, but they have, and it is better to give them up than to run the risk of ruining your body, and I am sure you will feel better for having made the change.

3. Still another help is in regard to your *sleeping*. Take enough exercise during the day, in study, work and play, so that when bedtime comes you will be ready to go to sleep at once. If possible, get your parents to let you sleep alone, and not on a feather bed, but on a good hard mattress. Be careful to learn the habit, when sleeping, of keeping your hands away from the lower

parts of the body. You can do this if you try. Also be careful, when you awake in the morning, to arise at once, and do not lie in bed, awake, thinking. This last suggestion is very important.

4. Still another help is *the choosing of good companions.*

(*a*) *Books.* Read good books. I have already warned you against obscene and impure papers and books. I now want to urge you to read all the good books you can. Read such books as treat of history and biography, and such authors as Miss L. M. Alcott, Henty, Dickens and Scott, but avoid all stories that will kindle your imagination, especially in a depraved and excited way.

(*b*) *Boys and girls.* Every boy can choose his own companions. It is to your interest to choose the best boys and girls as companions that you can find. I speak of choosing girls as companions. Of course I understand that boys do not want to, and

I do not believe they should, make many close companions of girls, but I do believe that it is a good thing for boys to have girl friends, provided they are *good*, *pure girls*. Paul says,* "Evil communications corrupt good manners," and so if we choose evil companions our manners will become corrupt, and I have found it to be true that many boys are taught to commit self-abuse by their companions. Choose the best boys as your friends—boys that will help you to be pure and to do right, rather than boys who, having learned to be impure themselves, will endeavor to make you impure also.

Just as I had finished writing the sentence above, I was interrupted by the ringing of the fire bell, and hearing that a large fire was in progress down town, I left my study, mounted my wheel, and was soon at the place where a large brick building was

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* I. Cor. xv: 33.

in flames. While standing looking at the flames as they consumed the interior of the building, one of my boy friends rode up on his wheel, and we talked together about the fire. He was only thirteen, and a bright, intelligent boy, and as I noticed the great excitement caused by the fire, and the hard work which the firemen were doing in order to put out the fire and save the building of brick, I could but pray God that as much effort might be put forth to quench the fire of impurity that is burning up so many of our boys, and in so doing save the building of flesh and bones which has within it a human soul. After the fire was put out I met this same boy again, and we rode off together. Thinking it a good time to say a word that perhaps might put out the fire of impurity if it was burning within him, I spoke to him about self-abuse and its results, and he then confessed to me that he had been taught to do it about a year before by one of his father's hired men and

that he had been doing it ever since. He also said that he did not know what the results were, and when I told him as I have told you in this little book, he said that God helping him he would never do it again. O, my boy, is not this a warning to be careful to avoid the companionship of all who would lead you to be impure. God help you to choose the best companions. I asked the boy just referred to when it was that he was most tempted to commit this sin. He told me that it was when he did not have anything else to do, and this leads me to tell you that a great help against impurity is to be always busy with mind and muscle. *Boys must have something to do*, and it is when they are not doing something which is right and good that they are tempted to be impure. Keep your mind active with pure thoughts and impure thoughts will find no room.

5. Still another help is *good exercise*. I believe every boy ought to be an athlete,

to some extent, at least. "Be what God intended you to be—a boy while boyhood lasts." Play baseball, football, tennis; run, jump, row, swim, and, in fact, take part in all kinds of games, and you will be freer from temptation to impurity for having done so. In the winter, when athletic games are impossible, exercise by skating and coasting, and if possible, be a member of a Boys' Department of a Young Men's Christian Association, so that you can get gymnasium exercise. Exercise taken in a proper way is a thing that all boys ought to have. God never meant that a boy should be cooped up with his books all the time. Books are very good, but books without physical exercise, are ruinous to boy life. I think that if you are careful *not to do* the things I have warned you against, and careful to *to do* the things I have suggested as helps against temptation that you will be able to conquer this awful habit of self-abuse.

Yet I have not spoken of

THE GREATEST HELP

a boy can have, and not only the greatest but the surest help to a life of purity. I refer to the purest among the pure — the man Christ Jesus.

I want to tell you an experience of my own in regard to a habit which I learned when a boy of nine or ten, and which I kept for over six years, though I often tried to give it up, yet never did until I let Jesus help me. I refer to smoking. As I said, I learned when only about nine years old, and I well remember how father used to whip me when I was caught, and when, later on, he found that whipping did not have the desired effect of making me stop, he offered me prizes. I remember when I was about fifteen he offered to give me one hundred dollars if I would give up tobacco for one year. I made up my mind to do it and win the money, but the habit was so strong that I broke over, and of course did not

get the money. A little later bicycles came into use among the boys of my acquaintance, and I asked father to buy me one, and he told me that if I would give up smoking for one year I might have a bicycle. I well remember how hard I tried. I threw away all the cigarettes I had, and determined to get the bicycle, but with the same result as before—I failed. Father died not long after, and I still continued to smoke, but one Sunday I went into a Gospel meeting for men and boys and my heart was touched with the love of Christ, and I decided to be a Christian, and then the matter of smoking came to my mind and I asked myself the question, Can I smoke and be a good Christian? and I knew that I ought to give up smoking forever, but then the failure of the past flashed into my mind. I was afraid I could not give it up. I thought a long while about it, and finally the words of Paul came to me:* "*I can do*

* Phil. iv: 13.

*all things through Christ which strengtheneth me.*" I wrote them on a slip of paper, and underneath I wrote: "I believe these words to be true, and believing them to be true, I will from this day with Jesus' help give up the use of tobacco;" and from that day to this I have never even wanted to smoke.

I tell you this personal experience, my boy, because I want to point your thoughts toward Jesus as the greatest help a boy can have to save him from all sin. The name Jesus means Saviour, and if you have been or are committing self-abuse, I plead with you to ask Jesus to help you give it up. He is your friend, and he can and will help you. Remember that Jesus was absolutely pure when upon this earth, and that no man has been able to show that he ever sinned, and remember also that he wants you to be pure, and that he has promised that if you give your heart to him he will cleanse it and keep it clean. My dear boy,

will you not just now bow your head and ask him to help you be pure?

I must now close this plain friendly talk with a few words as to

YOUR DUTY IN REGARD TO PURITY.

1. *Be absolutely pure yourself.* You have often heard the words, "Practice what you preach." I want *you to be a preacher of purity*, and so the first thing for you to do is to be pure, and this is of itself preaching.

2. Then, again, I want you to think that in some sense, at least, you are your playmate's keeper. It is your duty as a boy who is pure and who understands the results of self-abuse to warn other boys. Not in the way which a boy told me a few days ago that he warned his little brother whom he caught practicing this habit, namely, by whipping him, but rather by sitting down and in a friendly, loving way explain what the results are, and if you have a copy of this book give it to him to read, and then pray God to help

him be pure. It is a grand thing to be of service to God by turning boys from sin to righteousness, and the blessed promise is :* "They that be wise shall shine as the brightness of the firmament, and they that turn many to righteousness as the stars forever and ever." Do you not want to be a shining star in the kingdom of God? I am sure that you do, and so I I plead with you, first, to give your own heart to Jesus the Saviour of the world, and then, by the purity of your life and the activity of your service, win other boys from sin and Satan to righteousness and God.

My little talk I close with the earnest prayer that Jesus, who was once a boy, pure-minded and holy,—who so dearly loves the boys of to-day—will use it to the purifying of the boys of America and to the praise and glory of His name.

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* Daniel xii : 3.

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